

Message Text

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SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH SENGHOR

1. SUMMARY. DURING FAMILY DINNER AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE LAST NIGHT, SENGHOR REAFFIRMED HIS INTENTION TO GO AHEAD WITH MAY TRIP TO MAINLAND CHINA, NORTH KOREA, BANGLADESH AND INDIA. SAID HE HOPED TO GO TO US IN 1975. HE ATTRIBUTED NIGER PRESIDENT DIORI'S DOWNFALL TO LACK OF SKILL IN DEALING WITH MILITARY LEADERSHIP. OF THREE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, HE FELT EITHER CHABAN-DELMAS OR GISCARD D'ESTAING WOULD BE GOOD FOR AFRICAN CONNECTION BUT FEARED MITTERAND WOULD SEEK TO CURRY FAVOR WITH GUINEA'S SEKOU TOURE AND OTHER RADICAL AFRICAN REGIMES TO DETRIMENT OF RELATION WITH FRANCE'S TRIED AND TRUE AFRICAN FRIENDS. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT AND MADAME SENGHOR RECEIVED MY WIFE AND ME FOR FAMILY DINNER ALONG WITH THEIR FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD SON PHILLIPE, AND FAVORITE NIECE, NANETTE. PRESIDENT SAID HE WISHED TO HAVE RELAXED INFORMAL CHAT BEFORE TAKING OFF FOR EXTENDED TRIP TO PEKING, PYONGYANG, DACCA, AND NEW DELHI. HE DID NOT MENTION YET UNANNOUNCED CANCELLATION OF STATE VISIT TO GAMBIA BUT SAID HE WOULD PRESIDE OVER DINNER DEBATE IN FRANCE BEFORE HE AND MADAME SENGHOR LEFT PARIS ON MAY 5, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE DAY OF FRENCH ELECTIONS, FOR PEKING. ONCE AGAIN HE

NOTED PREFERENCE FOR CHINESE COMMUNISTS OVER SOVIETS, CLAIMING LATTER TO BE RACISTS, WHILE FORMER MAINTAINED CERTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCE FROM ALL FOREIGN PEOPLES IRRESPECTIVE OF COLOR OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND. AS FOR NEW DELHI AND DACCA, HISTORIC CONNECTIONS BETWEEN AFRICA AND INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT MADE VISIT TO THAT PART OF ASIA OF SPECIAL INTEREST. SENGHOR PROVIDED NO RATIONALE FOR VISIT TO NORTH KOREA.

3. SENGHOR MENTIONED HIS SEVERAL OUTSTANDING INVITATIONS TO RECEIVE AWARDS AND LECTURE IN THE US, INDICATING AGAIN THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO GO TO THE US IN 1975. SINCE THIS WAS NOT DIRECT QUESTION, I ONLY NODDED MY UNDERSTANDING OF HIS STATEMENT. SENGHOR SAID THAT, WHILE HE ADMIRERD AND WAS IMPRESSED WITH MANY ASPECTS OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION, IT WAS ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES THAT HE REALLY UNDERSTOOD THE LANGUAGE AND FELT PERFECTLY AT HOME.

4. SENGHOR SAID HE ADMIRERD US SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT AND HE LOOKED FORWARD TO INAUGURATION OF GATE EXPERIMENT LATER THIS YEAR, WHICH HE CONSIDERED WOULD BE OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF US AND SENEGALESE COOPERATION. WHEN I NOTED THAT OTHER NATIONS INCLUDING SOVIET UNION WOULD PARTICIPATE, SENGHOR SAID HE KNEW THAT BUT CONSIDERED US PRIME MOVER. HE HOPED SOVIETS WOULD NOT TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GATE FOR ESPIONAGE. SINCE THEIR ATTEMPT TO SPY ON US EMBASSY BY PLACING DEVICE IN CHANCERY SEVERAL YEARS AGO, HE ALWAYS QUESTIONED THEIR MOTIVES. MADAME SENGHOR SUGGESTED CHINESE WERE EQUAL DANGER, BUT PRESIDENT DID NOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE AT PRESENT IN SENEGAL, WHEREUPON MME SENGHOR TEASINGLY REMARKED IT WAS CLEAR THAT IT WAS PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND NOT SOVIET UNION THAT HAD INVITED PRESIDENT TO MAKE VISIT.

5. PRESIDENT SENGHOR WAS NOT EXPANSIVE IN COMMENTS OF NIGER COUP. HE FELT DIORI'S ERROR WAS IN BEING DISSATISFIED WITH LOYAL BUT MEDIOCRE MILITARY CHIEF OF STAFF AND REPLACING HIM WITH HARD-DRIVING, AMBITIOUS SOLDIER WITH BIG IDEAS. ANY AFRICAN CHIEF OF STATE HAD TO PAY GREAT ATTENTION TO MILITARY LEADERS AND MAKE CERTAIN THEY HAD MILITARY OR CONFIDENTIAL

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CIVILIAN JOBS THEY HAD TO WORK HARD TO MANAGE EFFECTIVELY. OTHERWISE THEY GOT RESTLESS AND SOUGHT TO TAKE OVER POLITICAL CONTROL. SENGHOR PRAISED OAU PRESIDENT GENERAL GOWAN'S INITIATIVE IN ASKING NEW NIGER REGIME TO GUARANTEE NO HARM WOULD COME TO DIORI AND OTHER IMPRISONED NIGERIENS.

6. TURNING TO FRENCH ELECTIONS, PRESIDENT SAID HE AND MADAME SENGHOR KNEW BOTH MODERATE CANDIDATES WELL FROM THEIR

PARTICIPATION IN FRENCH FOURTH REPUBLIC POLITICS. DURING EDGAR FAURE GOVERNMENT, FUTURE SENGHOR WAS SECRETARY TO THEN MINISTER OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH SENGHOR, ATTACHED TO PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE WHERE GISCARD WAS A DEPUTY CHEF DE CABINET. SENGHOR KNEW GISCARD AS SUPERIOR INTELLECT WHO BOTH APPRECIATED IMPORTANCE OF AFRICA FOR FRANCE AND WOULD OUTLINE ATTRACTIVE, RATIONAL PLAN FOR COOPERATION. PROBLEM WOULD BE WHETHER AS PRESIDENT GISCARD COULD BE PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FOR MEASURES. SENGHOR TENDED TO FAVOR CHABAN'S CHANCES FOR ELECTION BECAUSE HE MORE SKILLED POLITICIAN, MASTER OF WORKING COALITION AND ART OF POSSIBLE. ALSO THERE MANY TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BORDEAUX, CHABAN'S POLITICAL FIEF, AND SENEGAL. BOTH CANDIDATES HAD CONNECTIONS IN SENEGAL. GISCARD'S SISTER WAS NUN WITH BENEDICTINE ORDER NEAR DAKAR AND CHABAN'S EX-WIFE VACATIONING WITH PART OF THEIR FAMILY AT N'GOR. AS FOR MITTERAND, SENGHOR FEARED COMMUNISTS WOULD USE FRENCH LEADER MORE THAN HE WOULD USE THEM. SENGHOR, AS FORMER MEMBER OF FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY'S COMMITTEE OF DIRECTION, SAID HIS EXPERIENCE WAS THAT FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY ALWAYS GAINED MORE FROM COMMON ACTION PROGRAMS THAN SOCIALISTS GAINED. BESIDES MITTERAND WAS FRIEND OF SEKOU TOURE AND BECAUSE OF GUINEA'S IMPORTANT RESOURCES WOULD TRY TO REHABILITATE SEKOU AND THE FRANCO-GUINEAN RELATIONSHIP, EVEN IF THIS MEANT SACRIFICING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH SENEGAL AND OTHER FRIENDS SUCH AS IVORY COAST AND GABON. HOWEVER, SENGHOR SAID, THESE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS ASIDE, HE FELT MITTERAND CAPABLE OF LEADING FRANCE.

7. COMMENT: SENGHOR WAS IN THOUGHTFUL, BUT NOT PREOCCUPIED MOOD. HE PROBABLY SEES FORTHCOMING VISIT TO THE EAST AS OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON MINISTERIAL AND OTHER CHANGES SENEGAL MAY NEED TO MAKE IN INTEREST OF POLITICAL STABILITY AND MORE RAPID DEVELOPMENT. THERE WAS NO HINT TO RETIREMENT IN
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THE NEAR FUTURE, SINCE HE ENVISIONS TRIP TO US IN 1975, A DESIRE THAT ULTIMATELY WILL DESERVE SOME USG RESPONSE. SENGHOR CONTINUES TO SEE SOVIETS AS GREATEST EXTRA-AFRICAN, AND GUINEA AS GREATEST AFRICAN, THREAT. GDS. AGGREY

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